



## Interim report: Review of evidence of the health impact of famine in Ethiopia

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**Year:** 2010  
**Journal:** Perspectives in Public Health. 130 (5): 222-226

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### Abstract:

Historical accounts of famines in Ethiopia go as far back as the 9th century, however, evidence on its impact on health only started to emerge from the 15th century onwards. Unfortunately, famine has been endemic in Ethiopia in the last few decades. The 1973 famine is reported to have claimed over 300,000 lives. In 1985 approximately 10 million people were reported to be starving, with approximately 300,000 already dead and about 1000 dying daily. In the following years, droughts leading to food shortage have had local and national adverse health effects, in particular in 1999/2000. This paper describes the initial findings of a literature review of evidence on the health impact of droughts leading to famine in Ethiopia and highlights gaps in knowledge. The key finding, thus far, is the marked paucity of health impact data. This review also highlights the fact that adverse health impacts of famines are probably complex and long lasting. Interpretation of any health impact data is difficult as there are few baseline data to compare. Health effects also impact livelihoods. Livelihood disruption following famine does not just affect one generation but also subsequent generations. Surveillance systems are needed so that records of the health impacts of a drought that leads to famine can inform action. With climate change bringing increased likelihood of drought and famine in some parts of the world, the findings of this review could be beneficial not just for Ethiopia but also elsewhere.

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### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change;  
surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

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#### Communication Audience:

audience to whom the resource is directed

Policymaker

#### Early Warning System:

resource focus on systems used to warn populations of high temperatures, extreme weather, or other elements of climate change to prevent harm to health

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## **Exposure :**

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Food/Water Security

**Extreme Weather Event:** Drought

**Food/Water Security:** Agricultural Productivity

## **Geographic Feature:**

resource focuses on specific type of geography

None or Unspecified

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

**Non-United States:** Africa

**African Region/Country:** African Country

**Other African Country:** Ethiopia

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury

## **Intervention:**

strategy to prepare for or reduce the impact of climate change on health

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## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

## **Population of Concern:**

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

Review

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## **Timescale:**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## **Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

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